

**Docent Dates**

*(Image, right)*  
Leroy Grannis,  
Greg Noll Surf  
Team at Duke  
Kahanamoku  
Invitational,  
Sunset Beach,  
1966. SBMA,  
Museum  
purchase with  
funds provided  
by Jane and  
Michael G.  
Wilson



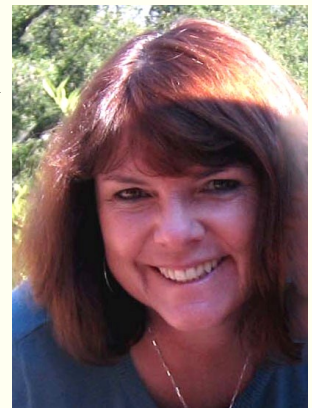
**Next Docent  
Meeting Sept 18**

Greeting, Docents,

Funny how the same dynamic occurs every summer. As a kid I remember when school got out in June and summer was an endless stretch of time to be filled with anything, everything, nothing. The expanse of time has shrunk, but I still get that feeling, even while summer slips through my fingers like sand.

The New Actives have been filling their summer days with Highlights, ArtVenture, and Special Request tours. (I asked them to check in and give us a little feedback. You can read their comments in this issue). To me, it never seems quite real that a class of provisionals is up and running as New Actives until these summer tours when they launch what will be their initial contribution to the council: offering visual literacy to students in the Santa Barbara School District.

We owe a debt of gratitude to our provisional instructors, Kathryn Padgett and Gretchen Simpson. Over the last three years, they have graduated 20 provisional (3, 9, 8). Bringing New Actives into the organization is what keeps our council humming along, maintaining strength and balance in our numbers as senior docents take leaves of



Lori Mohr, Editor

absence or go sustaining. These instructors have offered a steady hand in a tough job for three years.

We should be thanking our provisional mentors for their efforts as well: Mary Eckhart (Christy Close); Jadzia McDonough (Nicola Ghersen); Paul Guido (Carlos Hernandez); Christine Holland (Denise Klassen); Helene Strobel (Michelle Milakovich); Karen Brill (Sheila Prendiville); Mary Ellen Hoffman (Geri Servi); and Ralph Wilson (Pma Tregenza).

It's been a team effort preparing these docents to perform at SBMA standards. So thank you Kathryn, Gretchen, and mentors for our eight New Actives. They are a gift to the docent council.

In this issue you're being treated to a slice of *Labour and Wait* in Bird's Eye View from Marty Molof, the book review of a fun summer read from Amanda McIntyre, and a twirl through Albuquerque with Ricki. Summer's not over yet.

## Bird's Eye View

*By Marty Molof*



*Labour and Wait* is an extremely diverse exhibit of contemporary art. The oldest work was done in 1987 and all but five were done in the 21st century. All except one of the artists represented are living and most are between 40 and 50 years old. Subject matter is wildly different, ranging from surrealistic videos to wood carvings.

Materials used include wood, manmade and natural fibers, clay, glass, paint, marker pen, recycled plastic bottles and shopping bags, canvass, mixed media videos, etc. One work used wood, metal, ceramics, fiber and another has 11 listed materials going into its construction. And it moves!!

Many of the works are three-dimensional. There is one object that extends almost from floor to ceiling, another that hangs from the ceiling, and one spread out along a large area of the floor.

Although all the artists are contemporary, many of the works directly reference the past. Some objects are related to traditional crafts. However in contemporary art there is really no distinction between categories such as "crafts" or "fine art". A few objects are related to labor—one to the labor movement and another (if you know its history) to Marxism and the commodity culture. Many of the works were labor intensive for the artists creating them.

In contemporary art anything goes. Sometimes the art-going public can use a little help in appreciating these works without making judgments or evaluations. Maybe that's why I like contemporary art so much—most people are open to that help from a docent.

To me the show is weird, wild and wonderful. I think our visitors leave feeling the same way.

My heart beat like a hummingbird; the new *Labour & Wait* exhibit opened only two hours before my first adult Highlights tour. Three pieces from my original tour were lost to the change in shows so my three new pieces now were coming from the new show. I began my tour with an introduction and suddenly everything that I'd heard since the first docent class came to be - I was having fun. The nerves were gone and they have remained so in the six tours I've done so far. I'm in heaven.

Pma Tregenza



I have been surprised by the number of special request tours in addition to highlights and camp tours. You should be ready to work the minute you graduate. I've really enjoyed touring children more than I expected. Whether its chaotic or not, they always have something entertaining to say.

In my last tour, a boy asked me where the dinosaurs are. Oh well..

Sheila Prendiville



The docent course for sure has been a great tool that prepared me for my favorite activity this summer: Showing the magnificent art in our museum.

Carlos Hernandez



I've only done kid tours so far and the kids have been great. I had one Highlights scheduled, but didn't get anyone. The guards told me it was a slow day. It happens I'm told. I feel prepared but at first was worried that I didn't have enough support. As it turns out, I was ready to handle it.

Christy Close



I am really enjoying touring the children's camps this summer and using VTS. It's such a joy for me to view art through the eyes of a child. I learn so much from them every time.

Nicola Ghersen



I did my debut tour last Tuesday with the children from the summer art program--- I loved doing it! I taught first graders for almost forty years and didn't realize how much I miss teaching until I met those children. There is no better company to keep than that of a child of any age. I am so glad to have the opportunity to do this.

The children were amazing, as children always are!

Michelle Milakovich



By Rosamund Bernier

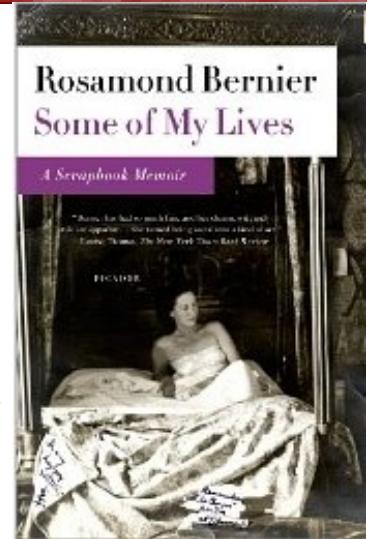
Reviewed By Amanda McIntyre



Let us meet Rosamund Bernier, who at ten years old was put on a ship by her father and sent to a boarding school in England. Though little known outside the art world, she was a fixture in it, as a writer, editor and lecturer. She came to know many significant artists and writers of the 20th century, spending over twenty years in Paris at the center of the art world. She wasn't an artist or a socialite, but she turned being social into an art. She started out covering fashion after landing a job at Vogue, and was the magazines first European editor, her foray into the art scene that

led her to establish close relationships with Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, Fernand Leger, Joan Miro, Max Ernst and Alberto Giacometti to name just a few.

She wasn't just making friends, she was searching for subjects and conducting interviews.



In *Some of My Lives* (Picador-2011), she doesn't just name-drop; she gives details of someone's personality in interviews with some of the greatest artists and writers of her day.

In 1955 Rosamund cofounded the arts magazine *L'ŒIL*, an influential journal featuring works of the masters of Paris in addition to her in-depth interviews with them. She had a knack for being in the right place at the right time and thought nothing of trekking from country to country in post-war Europe to meet with the art gliteratti, her command of four languages a useful asset. She was given access to bed and board where all was fully-booked for anyone else. The photograph on the cover of *Some of My Lives* shows her in repose on the bed of a museum's house display!

After her return to the U.S. after a divorce, a friend invited her to lecture at Trinity College. That led to a gig at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where her talks were "the hottest ticket in town." In 37 years, she gave over 200 lectures at the Met. Her last lecture was in 2008 at the age of 91.

Her third marriage—to British art critic John Russell—took place on the estate of Philip Johnson at the Glass House in Connecticut. Leonard Bernstein was John's witness and Aaron Copeland gave Rosamund away.

Mr. Bernstein then composed a special piece of music as a tribute to the couple. Later in life, Alex Katz would do a portrait of them and give it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

At 95, Rosamund Bernier still cuts a swath in the fashion world with her couture outfits combining extraordinary ethnic fabrics and gems. She has been named for life on the Vanity Fair International Best Dressed list. (There is an amusing encounter with Frida Khalo who redesigns her apparel at one meeting).

*Some of My Lives*, a New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice, is an enjoyable quick read full of humor and wisdom as Rosamund dashes from brief encounters to more in-depth interviews.

This is a perfect summer read.

## My Own Private Albuquerque

by Ricki Morse



I recently joined my sister in Albuquerque to celebrate her 80<sup>th</sup> and found myself falling in love with the skies, then the people, and finally the museum where she is a Docent. At a mile high and half a million people, Albuquerque sprawls over the high plain, following highways toward Santa Fe and the pueblos, all but eclipsed by the towering skies and the distant mesas shimmering against the purple/blue/black Sandia Mountains, which frame the horizon to the east.

The sense of frontier is palpable. Spanish is not a second language; it is the alternate language, mirrored in the Museum's newsletter, *Qué Pasa?* The vastness of the desert, hundreds of miles of undeveloped land, invites memories of wagon trains and their intrepid seekers. The Old Town's reclamation of the original early 18<sup>th</sup> century town square provides shops and restaurants offering the work of local artisans, from jewelry to fabrics to ceramics as well as great red mole stew. This mix of cultures: the Pueblo Indians who first inhabited this plain, the Spanish expanding their New World empire, and the Americans and Europeans seeking new lives, provide an open atmosphere of exploration which I found enticing.

One morning, out for a latte, we visited a coffee shop with a traveling library collection. MollieO's friend, a book collector, brings dozens of boxes of books to the coffee shop several mornings a week, spreading them out on tables, helping visitors find a good read, taking orders for books he might have at home. The arising conversations range from horses to philosophy to the Man Booker prize. I experienced a sense of a floating community, not built on tradition or propriety, but on shared interests and a sort of non-invasive curiosity and presence.

On Sunday morning we attended The Church of Beethoven. Entering a converted warehouse, outfitted with state of the art sound and lighting, we were served homemade cookies, and settled in for the performance. A cellist introduced us to the inner world of 18<sup>th</sup> century composers for the cello, playing his baroque instrument.

We were invited to a silence break, just to soak in all the sound and get ready for something different, which was a poet, a local university professor, reading several works, deeply observant of the changes in his life through time.

Then our cellist returned and shared the differences in the



Albuquerque Sky, Photo by Ricki Morse, Summer 2013

modern cello, through his own explorations of the form. I felt so satisfied—not overwhelmed with ideas, just really satisfied.

But the highlight of the trip was getting to know the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History, which began at a Saturday night opening. We shared a full dinner buffet in the spacious lobby and then entered the exhibition, “Changing Perceptions of the Western Landscape.” Here the conversation began in earnest. With my recent emersion in skies, people and inheritance, I was confronted by the artists’ views of the current state of this environment—a combination of awe, apprehension and horror at the assaults on the pristine landscape seen through painting, photography, collage and diorama. In the midst of my enchantment with the natural environment, the display of eminent destruction was powerful and disturbing.

As it was a members’ reception, the audience knew what they were looking at and knew how to look. I heard their involvement in the conflicts between the burgeoning city and its pristine environment. I also became aware of the Museum’s inherent involvement not only in these issues but in the flow of activities and commitments within the community, in a way I had not before experienced.

The City of Albuquerque not only owns the Museum, but in 1978 it became one of the first cities in the country to adopt the 1% for art policy, which commits 1% of all new commercial construction costs to public art (Los Angeles didn’t sign on until 1989). But even more central is the Museum’s dedication to education. Their Museum School extends around the year from pre-school through adult education, with a varied and constantly developing program of classes in all mediums. The Magic Bus cooperation with the public schools brings thousands of students to Docent tours, while two years of training prepares Docents for gallery tours and additional programs train volunteers to lead tours of Old Town and public sculptures.

The sculptures in the expansive park spaces around the Museum number over 60, and it was here I found a way of sharing my Albuquerque with you.

Somehow sculpture, existing in our space with us, pushing and pulling back, is the kind of vibrant experience I relish. Three of these works spoke to me about my sense of the expanse and culture of Albuquerque, particularly Fritz Scholder’s *The Last Ride*, 1990 (right). My sister had introduced me to Scholder twenty years ago, when she met him in Taos. A quarter American Indian, born in Minnesota, he discovered his Indian heritage as he discovered his artistic language and developed in a dual world. In his studio in Santa Fe he excavated the space between what he termed “kitsch Indian” art and the artistic endeavor to explore the depth of the bi-racial/bi-cultural experience. This sculpture, “The Last Ride,” a nude male figure riding bareback on a rearing horse, is evocative in itself. Then we see that the



abstracted horse has no eyes, though his lunge is powerful. The man has no arms, echoing a classical sculpture or a Rodin torso. The smears of clay recorded in the cast bronze add a gestural, spontaneous feel to the huge mass, while the armless rider's body sags with age or despair, as if he were the last Indian on the plain or the last frontiersman to cross the continent.



We first read Charles Strong's *Cervantes*, 1997 (right) as a

massive misshapen boulder, perhaps pushed into place in the last ice age, and it is with surprise that we recognize the head of the 16<sup>th</sup> century writer Miguel de Cervantes or of his creation, Don Quixote. This granite behemoth proclaims the deep Spanish history of the area, and yet shows it toppled on its cheek, as if displaced through the centuries, broken like an ancient Greek god but still exuding the inherent power of its optimism and mystery.

Finally I was captured by a work that seemed to bring together my experience of this desert frontier, Jesús Bautista Morales's *Floating Mesa*, 1984 (below). The 126-foot sculpture captures a granite slab, as if floating, high above the ground balanced between by three stainless steel poles, representing the three



cultural wellsprings of New Mexico. Water cascades down the poles and silently drips from the edges of the granite slab. There is a pristine, primordial sense of the magic of creation, the slowly dripping water, the cascading falls, the suspended mesa, not yet set into place by creation. And the mesas do seem to float along the horizon, as if they could vanish or reappear at will.

Perhaps Albuquerque is a state of mind, one aware of its history, watchful of the threats to its existence and above all appreciative of its rare gifts. Clearly the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History relishes its challenges and is nourished by its community. The reciprocity between the city and its museum feels authentic and energetic, from its extensive Museum School programs to its alliance with the natural environment. The welcome the institution offers to each of us allows us to envision such a harmony in our own undertakings.

See you in Albuquerque!





William Henry Jackson, *Colorado Railway Mountain View*, 1898 Photochrom, SBMA Museum Purchase, from the exhibition *Un/Natural Color* on view through Septemeber 29, 2013

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